

HIS DARLING

By Walter Joseph Delaney
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"How did I come here?" murmured Ralph Norton, and turned in his bed and gazed out through the window of a cheerless, sparsely furnished room.

Far as he could see the sluggish river wound in and out a low marshy stretch. Barges loaded with coal moved lazily along. Beyond a group of dilapidated factories and shipyards was the city. It recalled the last fading picture presented to his consciousness, how long since he knew not, but that problem was instantly solved.

"We found you outside, where you had fallen into a cinder pit," spoke a melodious voice, and Ralph turned his glance to see, seated near his bed a young girl sewing.

She was poorly but neatly dressed. She wore few articles of adornment, her hair was worn without attention to fluff or flummery, but the sweet repose of her face, the kindly gentle eyes arrested the attention of the invalid and held it riveted.

"You have been there four days, unconscious," she went on. "You must not move, the doctor says, for your left ankle is broken."

Ralph winced as, moving the member in question, he was promptly made aware that it was not in normal condition.

"You are strangers to me," said Ralph weakly, "and this is a strange place. I recall wandering aimlessly about the docks with my suitcase."

"That is here safe," spoke the girl. "We found it by your side. You must have stumbled and fallen. The doctor I called was at first serious about the bruise on your head, but he said this morning that all danger had passed for that and you would have the broken limb only to trouble you."

"Only," repeated Ralph bitterly under his breath, and then sheer weak-

ness caused him to close his eyes and his mind drifted hazily.

His thought took in a present very unhappy and forlorn condition. He had left his home after a quarrel with his wealthy uncle, to make his own way in the world. Alas! it had been a hard, awakening experience for the disappointed young man. He had found false friends, hard knocks, was brushed aside in his efforts to secure work by men with a "punch" as well as those "with a pull!" He



"I Am Poor, Very Poor."

had to confess that he had not the training to combat in the journalistic arena with those who knew the ways better than he.

He had come from home with a very good outfit and his dressiness had helped him get several good assignments with a society journal. The season over, however, he had lost his position. No new ones offered. His money ran out and, selling off some of his effects to settle his debts, he placed the rest in a suit-